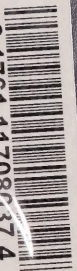


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The Black Youth of
Toronto: Exploration
of Issues

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The Black Youth of Toronto: Exploration of Issues

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**THE BLACK YOUTH OF TORONTO: EXPLORATION OF ISSUES
HIGHLIGHTS SUMMARY**

•The most powerful adaptational challenges faced by the Black youth in Canada at present are: difficulties in educational adaptation, high unemployment in the labour force and conflicts with the police.

•The Black youth population of Toronto enumerated in the 1986 Census (comprising those of Black and Caribbean ethnic origins aged 15-24) numbered 33,585 individuals, one fifth of the total volume of these ethnic origins.

•Caribbean born youth were less likely to achieve post-secondary education than the Canadian born youth. This pattern was more apparent for males than for females.

•The crude labour force participation rate of the Black youth of Toronto was higher than those Blacks living in Montreal and Halifax but lower than those of the overall youth of the country. Unemployment rates of the Black youth were lower than in Montreal and Halifax and slightly higher than in Vancouver.

•Compared to the youth of other major ethnic origins, Blacks and Asians had the lowest crude labour force participation rates in Toronto. The unemployment level was the highest at 6.4% points above the overall ethnic group average.

•The social barriers impeding the full integration of the Black youth to Canadian life range from systemic racial discrimination to exposure to urban and youth related pressures (e.g. drugs, street violence, etc).

THE BLACK YOUTH OF TORONTO: EXPLORATION OF ISSUES

DPAR/MULTICULTURALISM SECTOR

October 1989 / F.G. Mata

Purpose of the Document

Explore some adaptational issues affecting the Black youth segment of the population living in Toronto through a brief demographic analysis of the 1986 Census data.

1. Present Community Challenges of the Black Youth

The Black youth of Toronto is facing in the late 80's powerful adaptational challenges in terms of their social mobility and adequate insertion in the Canadian occupational structure. Three issues in particular stand out:

a) Difficulties in Educational Adaptation

There are indications that young Blacks are dropping out of school and advancing very slowly in the educational system with respect to other ethnic groups of the major urban centers. Black students are over-represented in general level and technical courses (Henry, 1988). A diploma from basic level courses has lower recognition at a university level. The Globe and Mail (Jan 17, 1989) reported that more than 28% of Blacks in high school were enrolled in basic level courses. Given that almost 4/5ths of students enrolled in general level courses are dropping out of basic level courses, it is likely that this population segment

has an over-representation of black students.

The Black Community Steering Committee 1985 report to the North York Board of Education in Toronto identified the root of the Black youth education problem as being both systemic and cultural. Problems were caused by "such factors as the lack of a culturally-sensitive education system as well as by the need for cultural adjustment on the part of some students" (p.19). Board information indicated that approximately 55% of the general white school population were enrolled in advanced streams and 15% in Basic and Vocational programmes. The corresponding figures for Black students were 4% and 60% respectively. As a consequence of problems such as streaming, being diagnosed as users of "non-standard English" and other societal pressures such as racial discrimination young Blacks are more likely to fail requirements for technical schools and, even if enrolled, to discontinue their training at initial stages of the process.

b) High Unemployment in the Labour Force

Unemployment among Caribbean immigrants at the time of the 1981 Census was measurably higher than that among comparable Canadian born persons (Richmond, 1989). Youth unemployment was particularly acute among Caribbean born males aged 15-24 in 1981. More than one in four of such ages in Montreal and one in eight in Toronto, was unemployed at the time. In both cases, rates were roughly fifty percent higher than were those for Canadian born males of the same age living in the same city (Richmond, 1989:30). As the numbers of youth leaving or dropping out of high

school increases, so too does their level of unemployment. Providing skills training and jobs for the Black youth has become a priority for the Black community.

c) Conflicts with the Police

In order to form a developing cultural identity, "fighting back" for self reliance is an attitude which has been born from the community's response to external societal pressures. However, this attitude among young Blacks is seen as confrontational behaviour by police forces and contributes to the creation of a tense relationship between these in the major metropolitan centres (Globe and Mail, March 13, 1989). This situation is reflected in the Jane Finch population of Toronto where several issues regarding the handling of police arrests have created sources of strain (e.g. the Lawson, Evans and Johnson cases). Blacks feel that the police negatively stereotype them and tend to "be suspicious of groups' of blacks, particularly youth in the streets" (Public Service Commission, 1980:6).

2.A Demographic Look at Toronto's Black Youth

Relevant data from the 1986 Census of Canada is presented in tables 1 to 8. For the purposes of most of this brief demographic outlook the Black youth segment is mostly restricted to the population aged 15-24 residing in Toronto CMA and who reported a Black ethnicity. **The Black ethnic origin group includes those who reported African Black, Black American, Canadian Black, West Indian Black and other Black origins in the 1986 Census.**

Table 1. Black Youth Population in Toronto CMA 1986

| Black Ethnicity* | Total | Males | Females |
|------------------|--------|-------|---------|
| All Age groups | 123705 | 55940 | 67765 |
| 10-14 | 11530 | 5665 | 5870 |
| 15-19 | 12905 | 6325 | 6575 |
| 20-24 | 12560 | 5800 | 6760 |
| 25-29 | 9710 | 4245 | 5465 |
| 10-29 | 46705 | 22035 | 24670 |
| ----- | | | |
| % Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| 10-14 | 9.3 | 10.1 | 8.7 |
| 15-19 | 10.4 | 11.3 | 9.7 |
| 20-24 | 10.2 | 10.4 | 10.0 |
| 25-29 | 7.8 | 7.6 | 8.6 |
| 10-29 | 37.7 | 39.4 | 37.0 |

 *Includes Caribbean origins. Single and Multiple responses.
 Figures contain random rounding.
 Source:DPAR/Multic. Sector/ Secretary of State and Statistics
 Canada

The total number of individuals who reported some Black ethnic origin (single and multiple response) in Toronto during the 1986 Census was 123,705 (see table 1). The younger segment of the Black population (15-24 years old) numbered 25,465 individuals, 20.5% of the total Black population. The Black youth of Toronto represents 49.9% of the total population of the same age and ethnic origin in Canada. Toronto was the major place of residence for the Black youth followed by Montreal (10.8%) and Halifax (2.3%). Table 2 presents the figures related to the population of Metro Toronto who reported a Caribbean ethnic origin. This population, which has a significant Black ethnic component, numbered 39,876 individuals and 20.2% of these were aged 15-24 years old. If the Black and Caribbean populations are counted together the aggregate total figure rises to 163,580,

being one fifth aged 15-24 years old (approx. 33,535 young individuals).

Table 2. Caribbean Youth Population in Toronto CMA 1986

| Carib Ethnicity* | Total | Males | Females |
|------------------|-------|-------|---------|
| All Age groups | 39875 | 18185 | 21685 |
| 10-14 | 3255 | 1500 | 1755 |
| 15-19 | 3645 | 1775 | 1870 |
| 20-24 | 4425 | 2100 | 2325 |
| 25-29 | 4095 | 1755 | 2340 |
| 10-29 | 15420 | 7130 | 8290 |
| | | | |
| % Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| 10-14 | 8.2 | 8.2 | 8.0 |
| 15-19 | 9.1 | 9.8 | 8.6 |
| 20-24 | 11.1 | 11.5 | 10.7 |
| 25-29 | 10.3 | 9.7 | 10.8 |
| 10-29 | 38.7 | 39.2 | 38.1 |

 *Single and Multiple responses. Figures contain random rounding.
 Source:DPAR/Multic.Sector/ Secretary of State and Statistics
 Canada

Tables 3 to 8 focus on the Black cohort aged 15-24 years old.

Table 3 presents the educational levels (highest school year completed) of the youth born in Canada and the Caribbean residing in Toronto. When the Canadian born and Caribbean are compared is apparent the concentration of these populations around the secondary levels, but some differences in the distributions are also evident. The Canadian born are more likely to have some degree of university experience than the Caribbean born (18.5% to 11.2%). A breakdown by Caribbean countries reveals the more disadvantageous position of Jamaicans (who are numerically preponderant in Toronto): 5.5% of their population had primary education or less and 10% had some degree of university education completed. The most educated Caribbeans are those born in

Trinidad and Tobago: close to 40% have a post-secondary education. When a gender comparison of educational levels is made, Caribbean females are found to be slightly more educated than males and are more likely to have reached post-secondary levels.

Table 3. Educational Levels of Canadian Born and Caribbean Born Youth : Toronto 1986

| Place of Birth | | Educational Levels * | | | | |
|----------------|--------|----------------------|---------|-----------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Pop 15-24 | N | All % | Primary | Secondary | Post Secondary Technical | Secondary Univ. |
| All | 570805 | 100.0 | 2.7 | 59.8 | 19.0 | 18.5 |
| Canada | 423395 | 100.0 | 2.1 | 60.3 | 19.1 | 18.5 |
| Caribb(1) | 30670 | 100.0 | 2.9 | 63.9 | 22.0 | 11.2 |
| Guyana | 8320 | 100.0 | 5.5 | 62.7 | 21.5 | 10.3 |
| Jamaica | 15075 | 100.0 | 1.9 | 66.1 | 22.1 | 9.9 |
| Trin/Tob. | 4735 | 100.0 | 2.2 | 58.2 | 23.8 | 15.8 |
| Barbados | 1005 | 100.0 | 2.0 | 60.2 | 22.4 | 15.4 |
| Other Car. | 1480 | 100.0 | 3.8 | 66.2 | 19.2 | 10.8 |

 *Highest level attained.

(1) Includes Haiti

Source: DPAR/Multic. Sector/Secretary of State and Statistics Canada

Table 4. Educational Levels of Canadian Born and Caribbean Born Young Males: Toronto 1986

| Place of Birth | | Educational Levels * | | | | |
|----------------|--------|----------------------|---------|-----------|--------------------------------|------|
| Pop 15-24 | N | All % | Primary | Secondary | Post Secondary Technical Univ. | |
| All | 287145 | 100.0 | 2.8 | 62.0 | 17.2 | 18.0 |
| Canada | 212855 | 100.0 | 2.4 | 62.5 | 17.4 | 17.7 |
| Caribb(1) | 14610 | 100.0 | 3.1 | 67.3 | 18.6 | 11.0 |
| Guyana | 3980 | 100.0 | 5.4 | 64.9 | 18.4 | 11.3 |
| Jamaica | 7385 | 100.0 | 2.1 | 70.0 | 18.3 | 9.6 |
| Trin/Tob. | 2095 | 100.0 | 2.2 | 61.8 | 20.3 | 15.7 |
| Barbados | 435 | 100.0 | 6.0 | 63.1 | 11.4 | 19.5 |
| Other Car. | 695 | 100.0 | 2.9 | 69.0 | 19.4 | 8.7 |

 *-Highest level attained

(1) Includes Haiti

Source: DPAR/Multic. Sector/Secretary of State and Statistics Canada

Table 5. Educational Levels of Canadian Born and Caribbean Born Young Females :Toronto 1986

| Place of Birth | | Educational Levels * | | | | |
|----------------|--------|----------------------|---------|-----------|--------------------------------|------|
| Pop 15-24 | N | All % | Primary | Secondary | Post Secondary Technical Univ. | |
| All | 287145 | 100.0 | 2.8 | 62.0 | 20.9 | 14.3 |
| Canada | 210540 | 100.0 | 1.7 | 58.1 | 20.9 | 19.3 |
| Caribb(1) | 16060 | 100.0 | 1.8 | 60.7 | 25.3 | 12.2 |
| Guyana | 4340 | 100.0 | 4.7 | 60.5 | 24.7 | 10.1 |
| Jamaica | 7695 | 100.0 | 2.3 | 62.4 | 25.3 | 10.0 |
| Trin/Tob. | 2640 | 100.0 | 1.7 | 55.3 | 26.7 | 16.3 |
| Barbados | 575 | 100.0 | 0.0 | 54.8 | 32.2 | 13.0 |
| Other Car. | 785 | 100.0 | 3.2 | 64.3 | 19.1 | 13.4 |

 *-Highest level attained.

(1) Includes Haiti.

Source: DPAR/Multic. Sector/Secretary of State and Statistics Canada

Tables 6 to 8 present some indicators of economic activity with respect to the Black Youth segment in Canada and Toronto. The crude labour force participation rate (LPFR) is the ratio of persons in the labour force (employed+unemployed) to all non-institutionalized persons over the age of 15 and using a reference week. Although it is a general indicator of economic activity, its interpretation is not straightforward. High LPFR's may be attributed to high proportion of working age individuals in the group under study rather than financial security. Low LPFR's may be associated with the group's capacity to afford young people prolonged schooling or to let older people retire. However, it is also likely that the LPFR measures the degree to which group members have withdrawn from the labour force in discouragement (Sullivan ,1978:166). A negative interpretation of low LPFR's argues that high unemployment leads to discouragement from the labour force and that discouragement leads to withdrawal from it. Unemployment is a component of the LPFR and is measured here by the crude unemploment rate (UR) which is defined as the unemployed labour force expressed as a percentage of the total labour force in the reference week of the area, group or category (1986 Census Dictionary: 64).

Table 6. Crude Labour Force Participation and Unemployment Rates of the Black Youth Population (15-24) in Major Provinces and CMA's: Canada 1986

| Black Pop.15-24(1) | Crude LFPR | Crude UR | Pop.15-24 |
|--------------------|------------|----------|-----------|
| All Youth | 67.8 | 17.0 | 4161195 |
| Black Youth | 59.5 | 21.9 | 50985 |
| N.Scotia | 53.1 | 35.5 | 2995 |
| N.Brunswick | 55.6 | 26.7 | 405 |
| Quebec | 48.4 | 40.5 | 8435 |
| Ontario | 62.1 | 17.0 | 32605 |
| Manitoba | 66.0 | 23.4 | 1265 |
| Saskatchewan | 68.8 | 24.5 | 385 |
| Alberta | 62.1 | 21.6 | 2650 |
| B.Columbia | 65.1 | 20.3 | 2120 |
| Toronto CMA | 62.3 | 16.4 | 25465 |
| Montreal CMA | 46.1 | 40.7 | 5525 |
| Halifax CMA | 57.6 | 36.8 | 1155 |
| Vancouver CMA | 63.9 | 14.1 | 720 |

(1) Black ethnic origin single and multiple responses. Provinces and Territories with N equal or less than 40 are excluded.
Source: DPAR/Mult.Sector/Secretary of State and Statistics Canada

Table 6 shows the LFPR's and UR's for Black youth populations living in several geographical locations in Canada. The empirical findings with respect to the Black labour force characteristics across Canada are similar to Richmond's (1989) demo-analysis of Caribbean immigrants using 1981 census data. An initial inspection of economic indicators shows visible lower LFPR's and higher UR's of Blacks with respect to the overall population of the same age in Canada. Blacks were behind the national LFPR average by 8.3% points and almost 5% above the UR national average. At the provincial level, the highest LFPR's were those of segments living in the Prairie Provinces while the lowest were

displayed by the Atlantic Provinces and Quebec. UR's were generally high particularly in Quebec (40.5%) and Nova Scotia (35.5%). The Blacks of Montreal were participating less in the labour force and were more likely to be unemployed during the Census reference week. The Black youth of Toronto had a relatively intermediate position with respect to these economic indicators but, if an intra-urban comparative perspective is taken (see table 7), they display comparatively lower levels of participation in the labour force.

Table 7. Crude Labour Force Participation and Unemployment Rates of Young Populations by Ethnic Origins: Toronto 1986

| Young Pop.15-24(1) | Crude LFPR | Crude UR | Pop.15-24 |
|--------------------|------------|----------|-----------|
| Ethnic Origins(1) | | | |
| British | 75.0 | 9.4 | 306315 |
| French | 75.3 | 9.6 | 52960 |
| European | 73.3 | 9.5 | 235165 |
| Arab | 66.5 | 15.4 | 3175 |
| West Asian | 61.5 | 14.0 | 2560 |
| South Asian | 63.4 | 12.9 | 20320 |
| East, S.E. Asian | 59.7 | 12.1 | 37225 |
| C., South Amer. | 65.0 | 12.5 | 2040 |
| Aboriginal | 72.7 | 13.8 | 6885 |
| Other | 69.4 | 12.4 | 3960 |
| Black | 62.3 | 16.4 | 25465 |
| All Origins | 72.4 | 10.1 | 570805 |

(1) Single and Multiple ethnic Origin responses.

Source: DPAR/Mult. Sector/Secretary of State and Statistics Canada.

Table 8. Crude Labour Force Participation and Unemployment Rates for the Black Population(1) of Toronto: Males and Females 1986

| Employment Indicators | Both Sexes | Males | Females |
|-----------------------|------------|-------|---------|
| Crude LPFR | | | |
| 15-24 | 62.3 | 63.3 | 61.5 |
| 25-44 | 90.1 | 95.0 | 86.5 |
| 45-64 | 85.8 | 92.5 | 80.6 |
| 65+ | 15.1 | 29.6 | 9.3 |
| All Age groups | 78.5 | 83.0 | 75.1 |
| Crude UR | | | |
| 15-24 | 16.4 | 16.3 | 16.5 |
| 25-44 | 6.4 | 6.3 | 6.5 |
| 45-64 | 4.9 | 4.2 | 5.5 |
| 65+ | 4.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 |

(1) Black ethnic origin single and multiple responses.

Source: DPAR/Mult. Sector/ Secretary of State and Statistics Canada.

A brief examination of the economic indicators of table 7 reveals that the Black youth of Toronto had a relatively lower LFPR (62.3) displaying also the highest UR of the major ethnic origin groups of Toronto in 1986. Blacks and Asian groups participation rates ranked lowest. Both groups of younger individuals displayed unemployment rates roughly 75% higher than the British, French and European origin groups. The unemployment level of Toronto Blacks was the highest at 6.4% points above the all ethnic group average of the young population residing in Toronto.

Finally, table 8 presents the gender and age comparisons for these economic indicators within the Black population of Toronto. With respect to the younger segment segment of the labour force it is evident that there is little difference between the levels

of males and females. Lower participation in the labour force and higher unemployment are characteristics shared by both genders almost equally. The age specific LFPR's display the regular pattern of higher membership at the 25-44 ages being the greater participation of males with respect to females in the labour force more evident for this group.

3. Critical Current Issues

The 1986 data on Toronto's Black youth suggests that this group is characterized by a disadvantageous position when educational and labour force participation measures are used to evaluate its performance. Educational levels are lower with respect to the overall Canadian born population of comparable age. Lower participation rates and higher unemployment rates with respect to other ethnic groups in Toronto are also apparent. There is a complex configuration of social forces creating social barriers which impede young Blacks' full integration in Canadian society. Among the probable factors contributing to produce and sustain the major outcomes mentioned in the first section, the stronger are likely to be:

- a) Systemic racial discrimination,
- b) Educational practices which contribute to the concentration of the Black youth in basic levels of high school, college and post-secondary training.
- c) Misunderstanding of the "fighting back" attitude expressed in the educational, occupational and civic realms of social activity.

- d) Difficulties in mobilizing adequately family and community resources,
- e) Rapid change of the family structure and social adjustment.
- f) Exposure to urban pressures and the problems which youth confront in the major urban centres of Canada (e.g. drugs, street violence, etc). This factor is becoming a more relevant one in view of the current interest in involving youth in crime prevention through what is called "youth empowerment" (see CYF 1989 report on the matter).

An extensive and systematic collection of data pertaining empirical indicators of the three major outcomes and the six factors will make possible a more precise issue identification in the Toronto's (or other location) Black Youth life in the community. This task may be accomplished by combining data from educational, occupational and socio-demographic sources as well as by a careful monitoring of the ethnic media.

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